

2002 Session Report

Dear Neighbor,

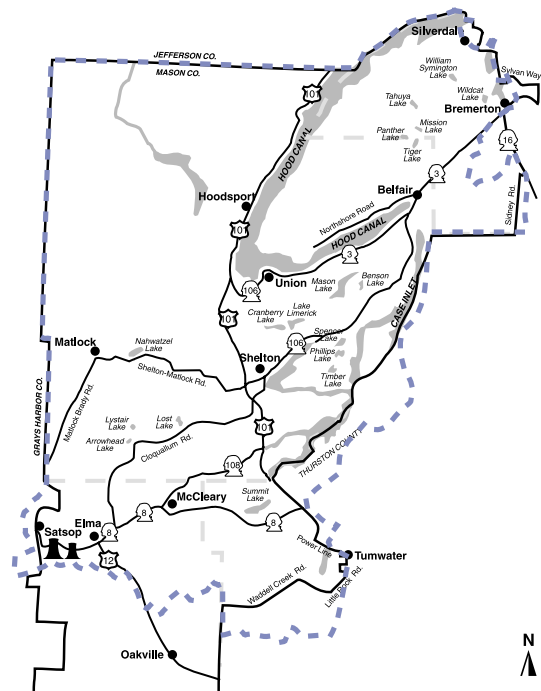
During the 2002 legislative session I continued to work to make our state more competitive, our government more efficient, and our communities safer and stronger. I also continued to put your interests ahead of party politics. This newsletter will tell you how I voted on key issues this session.

As always, it is an honor to represent you in the state Senate. Please feel free to contact me at my office at (360) 786-7668 or by e-mail (sheldon_ti@leg.wa.gov) with your comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

Tim Sheldon

Tim Sheldon
State Senator
35th District



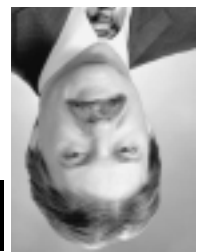
35th Legislative District

Because of redistricting the boundaries of the 35th district have changed.

Old boundary

New boundary

Tim Sheldon
Senator



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Session Report

2002

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2002 Session Highlights

Operating Budget

I voted no



During the past several years, state government has consistently spent more than it takes in. Rather than taking meaningful steps to reduce the cost and size of government we have plugged the holes with one-time funding and budget gimmicks. This year we did it again, selling part of our tobacco settlement on the cheap and drawing down our reserves to balance the books. As a result, we may face an even larger budget gap next year, by some estimates more than \$2 billion. I will not support budgets that live beyond our means. Ultimately they will lead to even more difficult budget cuts or calls for tax increases. We must make the tough choices needed to bring our spending under control. We also need to be creative and find government services that can be performed by the private sector. In that way, we can reduce the cost of government, but not reduce the level of service to the public. For example, privatizing our 157 state-run liquor stores and overhauling our outdated monopoly distribution system could save us \$100 million a year.

Finally, the heavy reliance on the gas tax penalizes rural drivers who have to drive many more miles to reach jobs and basic services. We should look at other funding sources, such as using the sales tax paid on transportation-related items (auto repairs and tires, for example) for transportation rather than general government expenses. In short, while we need a statewide transportation plan, we can and should do better. I am pleased we were successful in requiring a public vote on the statewide plan, which will be on the ballot this November.

Repealing Trapping Ban

I voted yes



Initiative 713, enacted in November 2000, claimed to prevent the use of body-gripping traps only on large predators such as cougars. In reality it applied much more broadly, covering moles and gophers as well. Under the law, someone using a trap to catch a mole can be fined up to \$5,000 or put in jail. I joined with a bipartisan coalition of senators to repeal this overreaching law. Unfortunately, the House refused to let the repeal come up for a vote.

Eliminating I-601

I voted no



Besides setting a spending limit, Initiative 601 requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to tap our emergency reserves. The idea was to limit the use of emergency reserves to situations where there was broad agreement that drawing down the reserve was necessary. Because I-601 is several years old, it takes a simple majority to amend it. That is precisely what happened as a bare majority voted to suspend the two-thirds vote requirement to use the reserve. I voted no because it clearly violates what the voters intended in the initiative and because it again represents a one-time "fix" for our budget rather than real reforms to bring our spending in line with revenues.

Streamlining Regulation

I voted yes



During the past year, we have heard loud and clear that our state is not competitive — jobs are leaving for places like Chicago. We strangle our businesses with regulations that are too complex, costly and slow. I supported a number of bills to make regulators more accountable, but the House did not bring these bills up for a vote. We were successful in exempting agriculture from the Shoreline Management Act, which will allow family farmers to use efficient farming practices, such as crop rotation, without fear of falling under restrictive new shoreline rules.

Public Vote on Transportation Taxes

I voted yes



This year the Legislature passed a statewide transportation funding package that would raise the gas tax 9 cents per gallon over two years, increase the sales tax on new and used vehicle sales by 1 percent, and increase gross-weight fees paid by trucks by 30 percent over two years. I voted against the statewide package for several reasons. First, we didn't go far enough in requiring our transportation agencies to operate more efficiently so we get the best value for our transportation tax dollars. Second, while the plan says it is for statewide transportation, most of the benefits flow into urban areas, especially freeway projects in central Puget Sound.

More Energy Generation

I voted yes



While the energy crisis has eased, now is the time to ensure we have adequate supplies for the future. The Legislature approved a bill I sponsored to make it easier and quicker for public utility districts to build efficiently sized gas-fired or renewable energy plants. By having more supplies, we will be less vulnerable to the types of price spikes we saw last year.

New Tacoma Narrows Bridge

I voted yes



I am pleased we approved a second Narrows bridge to relieve congestion on the Hwy. 16 corridor. The new bridge will be financed largely through tolls, with construction set to begin later this year. The project should be completed by 2007.